Murder Friends

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Murder Friends

by Hannigrammatic

Summary

Will and Hannibal meet at the house of both their intended victim. Hilarity ensues.

Notes

I'm a sinner, not a winner~ Inspired by LittleWriterWitch, who continues to keep me interested in writing! Take THAT, writer's block~

NOTE: Changing the title to Murder Friends to easier dictate the timeline, as I'm making this an ongoing series instead now! The series name is Murder Dating instead! ♥

Daddy Dearest

The bound man was shaking, sweating, and had managed to piss himself, all within just the few minutes it took for Will step back and admire his handiwork. Clicking his tongue, the dark-clad librarian tugged at a stray end of rope to pull it taut across a heaving chest, stood up straight, and smiled happily.

Will walked into their small apartment with his arms full of groceries, and was putting away the ice cream -'Chocolate Death' flavor, his daughter's favorite- when Abigail wandered into the kitchen with a sniff. Will closed the freezer door, adjusted his glasses, and frowned.

"What's wrong, sweetheart?" he asked.

"I was coming home from piano practice when a man attacked me," Abigail whispered, pale face drawn and tears barely contained. "He tried to pull me into his vehicle and he called me a 'whore'. What's a 'whore', daddy?"

Will's eye twitched and his mouth closed on a loud click. Anger filled him immediately, painting his vision red. Abigail was twelve years old, bright, beautiful, and incredibly talented in anything she put her mind to. She was slighter than most girls her age, with straight brown hair to her shoulders, and wide blue eyes. Her resemblance to him was uncanny, and no one could tell at a glance that they weren't blood relatives, but Will was incredibly fine with that. He'd raised her from her birth, and while it had been a difficult many years as a single father, he made do and he was proud of his little girl.

"What did this man look like, hun? Tell me everything. And why didn't Miss Sterling walk you home today?"

Abigail sniffled and looked away, scuffing her shoe on the floor with a squeak. Will knelt before her in a crouch and gently grabbed her arms to face her back towards him, looking into her eyes beseechingly. It was hard to ground himself with how angry he was, but he would do it for his daughter. And he'd have stern words with Miss Sterling.

"She had an emergency. A family one, she said. She walked me halfway. The man came out of a weird store."

"Abi, did you take a shortcut?"

Blue eyes blinked and filled with tears as she nodded once. Will sighed softly and pulled her into a hug, feeling his heart jump when small arms wrapped around him and she began to cry in earnest. He rubbed her back and soothed her hiccups, and when she pulled back he wiped her tears away and made a silly joke that had her giggling. After a bit of coaxing, she told him about the man and his gross smell and the old car that he drove with the dent in the side and the paint scratched halfway off.

The next day, Will found the man easily by walking down the street Abigail was now forbidden from being near. Hands in the pockets of his long dark coat, Will lowered his face

*against the high collar and trailed after the stench that followed the bastard that had **dared** even approach his daughter, much less touch her.*

Muffled cries for help made Will smile wider as he snapped gloves onto his hands. Most of the room was covered in plastic to make cleaning up easier. He hadn't bothered with a mask, knowing they were alone and that only one of them would be leaving the house today. Well… alive and whole, that is. Striding around the man tied up in the chair, Will whistled an innocent toon and rolled his shoulders in a stretch, preparing himself. It was easy to quell any doubts when he thought about Abigail's drawn features and small shaking body.

"Do you know why you're here today?" Will asked casually, coming to a stop in front after circling his prey.

Wide and vein-red eyes blinked in sincere confusion, a frantic shaking of a shaggy-haired head accompanying it. Will bared his teeth slightly and looked up at the ceiling as his rage bubbled just beneath the surface. It was bad enough that this monster had attacked his daughter, but it was worse that he apparently intended to deny it. Well, Will was a very thorough person. He may sit behind a desk or stock shelves in the library, but he had to have extensive knowledge of where everything was as a result, and he was good at it. His mind was sharp and intuitive and he used it as a weapon proudly.

"So yesterday you were coming out of the sex shop on Fifth, that disgusting place with the burnt-out neon sign -how do you even walk in there by the way, there's a layer of grime on the door that I wouldn't touch in a million fucking years. Anyway, you came out, probably lit up a cancer stick, maybe you were digging your keys out of your jacket."

As he spoke, Will began to saunter around the bound man again, making sure his boots clicked loudly in the dimly lit room. It was fortunate that the dirty man lived so far removed, still in the city of course, but on the outskirts, in an old crumbling duplex with one side empty. Just as the man was, the place was filthy, covered in dust and garbage and unwashed clothes. With a disgusted snarl, Will had nearly walked on a used condom when he'd first picked the lock and entered the place. Every room smelled of stale sex.

"So you're there, grunting and out of breath because you're a fat pig, and you spot a little girl walking down the street. She can't be more than twelve, and she's dressed in her favorite shirt and jeans, and usually there's a nice lady with her that you love to oggle. You've followed them before, right?"

With some digging and indeed stern reprimanding, Will had learned from Miss Sterling that the man frequented a bar across the street where Abigail took piano lessons. He remembered the conversation with the young lady who was trusted to get his daughter home safely, and felt his rage simmering just barely in his control. For her part, at least Miss Sterling had the grace to blush and stammer and apologize, but Will fired her after the scolding was over regardless, especially having learned that she *knew* the man, albeit in passing. According to a few other people on the street, the Stinky Man, as he was unoriginally called, was a notorious creep. Will sucked his bottom lip into his mouth and closed his eyes on a long blink as he came to a standstill in front of Jorge Corwell, whose name he had gleaned finally from a tiny old lady with a penchant for gossip.

“Right?” Will asked again, letting his own lip go before he bit into it enough to draw blood.

Jorge looked up at him in disbelief, but nodded eventually. Will inclined his head and bowed his upper body in a dramatic show of thanks, before he took a single step closer.

“How many people know you’re not just a creep, but also a fucking pervert?” Will asked in the same light-hearted tone he’d begun the conversation in. “Or does anyone even know you? Probably not. You’re alone and miserable and it’s really no wonder why.”

Jorge grunted and struggled against his bindings, eyes wider as the scent of fear doused the room, coupling with sweat and urine and staleness, an altogether disgusting scent suitable for an incredibly disgusting man. Will’s words had faded off into an animalistic snarl, and he had stopped with his boots touching the man’s own, lower body bent to lean close to peer long and hard into the thick lines of the creep’s face. His smell was worse at this proximity, but Will took it in stride as he let his face pull into a grin he had no doubt would be terrifying to look at. And he was not disappointed.

“Well, Mister Corwell, you’ve had the unfortunate impulse to attack my daughter,” and here Will let the last word draw out into another growl of anger. “Who was walking home from her piano lessons, though I’m sure you already knew that. How much did you pay Miss Sterling to leave for a ‘family’ emergency? Fifty bucks?”

A nod. Will’s upper lip twitched and he closed his eyes. The first guess had been the lowest, and it was bad enough that it was the correct one. Fifty bucks to leave a defenseless child unattended. Will knew he didn’t pay Miss Sterling much, couldn’t afford to. He was a librarian, not a doctor or a politician. But he had been nice and forgiving of a young adult’s tendency to party late into the night and miss a few more days than he would normally be tolerant of. Thankfully his boss was understanding if he had to leave work early to pick up his daughter and bring her to the library to wait out the rest of his shift, but the fact remained, he’d be nice. Incredibly nice. He’d even bought Miss Sterling a coffee.

“Okay. Nice. Fifty bucks for my daughter. Mister Corwell, do you understand why you’re here now?” the question was rhetorical but the man nodded even so, vigorously and in a near panic as he finally realized he was dealing with a very angry father.

Something behind his eyes told Will that he was taking the situation seriously now. From the get-go, even as Will pounced on him from the shadows, the man had been in a state of disbelief rather than genuine fear despite wetting himself, the action probably having been in shock rather than fright, Will surmised. Why he’d default to that was a mystery to Will, as the man was not exactly subtle with his creep factor, but he had an idea it was easy for anyone to convince themselves they were invincible if they hadn’t been caught before. Will dreaded the thought of anyone else’s daughter or sibling or child ever having been in this house, and as vehemently as he wished it was never a thing, odds were high that it had been at some point.

Will moved his face away with a barely concealed grimace, unable to take the scent of unwashed flesh and clothes and cloying sweat and bitter piss any longer. The air had a palpable twinge of uneasiness to it now, and it bred with the fear to make a very decidedly lovely atmosphere, if Will had any say in it. Without any more preamble, he reached into the

pocket of his coat and took out a switchblade, popped out the glistening sharpness, and wiggled it in Jorge's line of sight coyly.

"Your first mistake," Will informed the man's now violently struggling body. "Was even *thinking* about looking at my daughter. No, no, let me back up. Your first mistake was ever looking at any child the way you do. The very first time you fucking did it, your fate was sealed, Mister Corwell."

With a sleight of hand, the blade whistled through the air, finely sharpened point cutting into flesh like warmth through butter. Jorge screamed behind his gag and jolted in the chair, struggles beginning anew despite the fact that Will had hardly put any strength behind the strike. There was blood, bubbling up slowly and oozing down a ruddy cheek, and it probably barely hurt. But it was the thoughts that spurred the man into wildness. Bound and helpless and at the mercy of a blade-wielding father who would see the entire world burn for his precious daughter. And oh, Will honestly would do anything for his Abigail. Would and had and always did. With a feral grin, Will struck the other side of the man's face and opened his skin in a twin wound.

"I see Mister Corwell has made more enemies than me this night," a voice said suddenly.

Will whipped around, honest shock pulling his muscles tense. He very nearly dropped the switchblade in his haste, but managed to secure it at the last moment in a tight grip as he came to face the man who had entered the building unseen or unheard. Partially veiled in shadows in the dim room, Will could only tell that their new arrival was taller than himself, bulkier, and clad in a suit that probably cost more than either of the men already in the building made in a lifetime so far combined. Encasing the expensive fabric, though, was a perfectly fit plastic covering, and it was ridiculous enough for Will to almost find himself laughing. He would were this any other time, and under any other circumstances, but perhaps not to the man's face. Something about him screamed *danger*. Will tilted his head at their new guest.

"Hi," Will greeted with a calm he didn't feel, still shocked at having been caught in a room with a bound and gagged and bleeding man.

The new man's words registered quickly, though, and Will tossed an uncaring glance over his shoulder at his prey. Struggles having stopped for now, the sweating creep was looking between them and blinking, hope blooming in the light of his eyes that maybe he would be rescued. Apparently he had neglected to make sense of the stranger's words as well.

"Hello," the stranger greeted with a nod of his head.

Will gripped the blade in his hand tighter, but disguised the action as he swept his arm behind him to bow dramatically to the figure in the shadows, careful of the sharp edge. Will was quick to adapt to a situation, and even quicker to put himself into a position to defend himself were it necessary. It was very likely that Mister Corwell had indeed made more enemies than Will, but the odds that two of his spurned would-be victims or victims by proxy would be here at the same time on the same night were very slim. Slim enough to put Will on edge immediately despite the polite tone the stranger brooked.

“I am pleased to make your acquaintance,” Will said pleasantly and grinned with a false cheer, standing up from his bow and keeping his arms crossed behind him.

“The pleasure is mine.”

The man finally stepped closer, plastic suit surprisingly soundless. Will had a moment to consider the merits of dressing in such a way, even if he didn’t have obscenely expensive clothes to protect from blood spatter, but cut the thought short as he laid eyes on the stranger fully. The light from the limply hanging bulb on the ceiling didn’t lend much justice to the six-foot-something of bulk that approached, but it did gleam off of silver-brown hair slicked back in a precise part, brought exotic features into contrast, highlighting sharp cheekbones and bringing the scar on the bridge of a regal nose into sharp relief. Eyes so dark they looked black, and lips almost delicate looking, the stranger gave Will the impression of a museum director or a politician or anything in between, or even just a well-to-do entrepreneur. Truthfully it was difficult to put any label on someone who expertly made themselves appear inconspicuous.

“I’m Hannibal,” the man offered his hand once he was in range, still a foot away but squaring his feet in an unspoken challenge, daring Will to continue their charade of politeness.

Will looked at the hand and smirked inwardly at the plastic glove that covered the long fingers. The night had taken an unexpected turn, but Will was good at going with the flow. Ignoring Jorge, who was looking between them with an almost hilariously confused expression now, Will strode closer and grasped Hannibal’s hand in a strong grip with one hand, shaking it once firmly. In return, Hannibal closed his larger hand around his politely but with a strength that said -again without words- that he was just as capable of playing the game they found themselves partaking in as Will was. With his other hand behind his back clutching the switchblade, Will looked up into dark eyes that were brown up this close, nearly maroon, and that’s all she wrote, as the saying goes.

“I’m Will,” he returned the courtesy with another cheery smile that was no longer false.

Dear Friend

Chapter Summary

Murder strangers become murder friends. Or, Will loves his daughter very much, and Hannibal realizes this very fast.

Chapter Notes

BAM. Wow, I'm having a blast writing this. All mistakes are mine~

NOTE: Changing the title to Murder Friends to easier dictate the timeline, as I'm making this an ongoing series instead now! The series name is Murder Dating instead! ♥

“So, you do this often?” Will asked curiously.

They were standing side by side now, both looking at Jorge Corwell as if he were an antique or a painting or maybe a particularly large animal ready for the slaughter. Which was rather apt, Will felt.

“Run into fledgling killers? Or kill?” Hannibal had his hands around his back and his body was tilted away just enough that he could be hiding something; similarly, Will was in the same position, and he wondered if they both conversed while palming knives.

“What makes you think I’m a fledgling?” Will arranged his face into a mock-offended scowl, but honestly, it was a correct observation.

“I believe it would be prudent to ask what doesn’t make me think that,” A polite nod at Will took the bite out of the comment.

“Shorter list, huh?” Another nod.

Jorge was looking at neither of them now, having closed his eyes to laugh. He’d lost control of his bladder again at some point, and the room was smelling freshly of urine again. It was a stench enough to make Will’s eyes water, but his glasses protected him from the brunt of it. He supposed his lack of expertise in that point was another check on Hannibal’s list - a murderer who let any sign of weakness show was probably dubbed a fledgling for life.

“I’m going to have to ask you to be quiet, Mister Corwell,” Hannibal said, and Will had time now to become aware that his voice was heavily accented, though he couldn’t place it at all.

The man bound in the chair didn't listen, probably couldn't even hear the soft request over his laughing, which was muffled around the gag but still loud enough to be annoying. Greasy hair twitched as his body shook in his mirth. Will gripped the switchblade tighter and felt his facade of calm and polite grace fall, reminded with a jolt that this man would have done horrible things to his daughter had she not gotten away. He made a mental note to ask her how she had managed to, when the subject was easier to broach and she was less shaken. There was an amount of pride that could be had here, knowing a little girl could have potentially beaten the shit out of this creep.

"Shut the fuck up," Will finally growled.

The blade whistled and buried itself into the side of Jorge's neck. The movement had been faster than anyone appeared to expect, though the sack of shit laughing in the chair was the only one that responded. Any sound or movement was successfully cut off as the knife made it's home deep into the artery there. Stepping back, Will returned to his position. He'd showed his hand this play.

"I believe I can safely say that was an overreaction, dear Will."

Will couldn't keep his own laughter at bay now. The situation was so bizarre. Two men in a filthy apartment on the outskirts of city, both here to kill one Jorge Corwell, a largely insignificant man, it could be noted, but no one got away with something forever. Will wondered just what he'd managed to do to piss of someone like Hannibal, whose very being oozed upper-class smoothness, a sense of calm that was nearly inhuman, and grace to match the most beautiful sculptures in the world. There was no doubt that the other man, who spoke of Will being a fledgling, was quite experienced in making lives disappear, though perhaps in a more grandiose way.

"Yeah, well, he was annoying me. And I can't be out all night."

Hannibal tilted his eyes away from a stuttering Jorge to peer at Will with a smile crinkling the corner of his eyes. Will returned the expression with a grin, and let his eyes travel over the man's figure again. He was lean and several inches taller than Will, filled out his suit perfectly with each stitch tailored to every angle of his body. It was a little ruined by the plastic covering, but overall Hannibal was looking rather spry and fancy. It was as if he'd just come from work, having decided casually that now would be the proper time to dispose of a pest. Will expected that there was a lot of truth to that.

"So, you do this often?" Hannibal parroted, and Will laughed again, one that was short-lived but no less amused.

"No. I don't," Will answered truthfully. "Only when it's necessary."

"Ah. And what constitutes the death of Jorge Corwell as necessary this evening?" Hannibal was bouncing on the balls of his feet gently as he spoke, and then he was leaning forward at the waist to peer at the aforementioned man, whose eyes had rolled into the back of his head.

"He tried to hurt my daughter."

Maroon eyes looked into Will's blue ones briefly as Hannibal stood up straight. With a movement faster than Will's had been, he buried a large butcher knife into Jorge's sternum. The action jolted the bound body, and Will blinked in surprise that he just barely managed to wrangle into a pleased expression.

"That was for your daughter," Hannibal informed Will with another easy smile.

Blood dribbled out around the large knife, and then, with a quiet grunt, Hannibal gripped the handle of the weapon and forced it down, through flesh and fat and bone and organs. It must have taken phenomenal strength to manage such a feat, but Will was more focused on the dying man's eyes, which had snapped onto him. There was still disbelief there, along with accusation and desperation. But the fact that he couldn't believe he was dying after the life of crime and sodomy he'd lead had Will's nerves fraying. He moved forward as Hannibal stepped back and grabbed onto the handle of his smaller blade, pulled it across a heaving throat into a bloody smile. Arterial spray exploded out in a geyser that arced through the air elegantly.

"That was also for my daughter," Will grunted.

He stepped away but left the switchblade protruding out of the bloody and wrecked neck, now sitting on the opposite side. Hannibal followed a moment after and they both crossed their arms behind their backs again. Jorge was dead, hadn't suffered enough as far as Will was concerned, but he was dead. Will had no need to watch the life leave those unbelieving eyes, as it wasn't a person being snuffed out that pleased him. This was for his daughter. He would do anything for Abigail. The spray of blood had lessened slightly, and the floor beneath the chair was soaked, a puddle rapidly forming and reaching out across the room over the plastic that covered the floor. Around them, the house shifted as if in complaint, floorboards creaking and walls grumbling as the building shifted in the night. Dim light made the life leaking out of Jorge's corpse look black.

"Messier than I normally prefer, I must admit," Hannibal commented.

"You have no room to complain. You're wearing protection," Will muttered with a smirk.

Hannibal blinked at him owlishly, but eventually returned it, before answering finally, "I do this very often. More often than perhaps you would believe. But it is a necessity for me as well."

"What did our lovely Jorge do to you?"

"He stepped on my foot."

It was Will's turn to blink at Hannibal. He took a slow step back to face the other man, arms falling to his sides and hands in a loose fist. He appraised the situation, noting that both of them had taken their turn in the game, had shown their cards, so to speak. But there was a very strong undercurrent of *something* going on right now, and nervous energy filled Will's limbs. It was close to anxiety but bearing more resemblance to excitement. Will would shake his head later for not recognizing the fact that he'd very simply had a chubby going on after snuffing out a life with his unexpected murder partner.

“So you decided he should die?” Will quirked a brow as he asked, loosely crossing his arms over his chest.

“Less decided. Instead it was required. I hold no patience for the rude, Will.”

Blood dripped in a steady flow onto the floor. They moved away from the river spreading out around the corpse in the chair finally, feet clicking over hardwood and plastic, and Will leaned against the counter in the kitchen as Hannibal rustled around in the cupboards curiously. The situation had become no less ridiculous, and the air between them was friendly - camaraderie borne of a life stolen together. Will had killed only four other people, all as a result of his daughter being upset or hurt and threatened. Three had been in self-defense, and one (now two), had been in anger, wholly meditated and planned out to the best of his abilities. He knew he should clean up now, disassemble the body and hide the pieces around the city as he’d done with the other ones. His bag of equipment sat ready in the bathroom, waiting for him.

“He was really rude,” Will agreed.

He found himself telling Hannibal just then about what Jorge had done and tried to do to Abigail. Left her name out of the equation, of course. But the words came out of him as if drawn by thread, as if the quiet veneer of Hannibal was a safe haven. For his part, Hannibal listened with a tilted head, respecting Will’s refusal to maintain eye contact easily, now that they were two men conversing and not two strangers looking down at a kill. The ridiculousness of the situation was not lost on Hannibal, either, but furthermore, it was the flame that ignited both of their curiosities about each other. And there was a lot of that between the two of them now. It wasn’t everyday that you met a person at an intended victim’s house and killed the man together, entirely unplanned and uncoordinated. It was even rarer that it worked out almost seamlessly.

“You love your daughter very much,” Hannibal observed eventually.

“More than anything,” Will nodded and then fell quiet.

He’d been too caught up in the anger that had moved him to sink the blade into Jorge’s carotid artery. Anger had fueled Will the entire evening, had lead all of his actions from leaving the house after tucking his daughter in and paying the babysitter, to tracking Jorge down and following him to find out where he lived. When the creep had left to saunter the streets and stink up everyone’s space, anger had slipped into his house in the form of Will Graham, librarian and incredibly protective father. It was anger that had prepared and then lain in wait for Corwell to return, and anger that pounced the incontinent man. Now Will was Will, and he would go home and dismiss the babysitter and clean up after himself after he cleaned up here, crawl into bed, and sleep. Or that’s how his routine previously went. Hannibal was an unknown denominator, and Will had no idea how it was all going to solve itself now.

“Are you going to kill me?” Will asked finally.

Hannibal was standing primly a foot away. He’d cast the contents of the kitchen cupboards all over the floor, crushed a few packets of food beneath a plastic-clad shoe, and now faced

Will, who looked briefly into eyes that were too dark now to discern color, the only lighting in here being the moon peering in through the window over the dirty sink. In the other room Jorge's body was flaccid with death.

"I am not. I believe that would defeat the purpose of getting to know one's colleague."

"Colleague?" Will asked, and then he laughed. "Am I your murder colleague?"

"You are. We are both murder colleagues. Though I must confess, I've never killed with anyone before."

His tone was wistful and surprisingly light, and Will looked away with his hand covering his smirk. He realized too late that there was blood on his gloves, and now on his cheek, but he couldn't let it bother him as amusement consumed him.

"Do, ah, do you want to be murder friends or something?" Will joked.

"I wouldn't mind it," Hannibal deadpanned.

Will's had dropped away and he met those eyes again. Appraised the man standing before him who had at some point mirrored his position, leaning on the island counter opposite in the cramped kitchen. His arms hadn't crossed his broad chest, but they were held loosely at his sides as Will's were. Regal features were drawn into a neutral expression, eyes still crinkling at the corners but soft-looking lips affecting a frown of sorts. His silver hair was still smoothed impeccably back over his skull, and the shadows dancing over his face likened him to a skeleton in certain angles. He was a big man, wide, but Will hadn't noticed it until now. Everything about Hannibal came off as mystery or deceit.

"Alright," Will said. "You've got yourself a murder friend."

Silence.

Then Hannibal's lips pulled into a grin that showed sharp and gleaming teeth, and he let out a single laugh that had Will's insides turning to liquid. The man before him was all sorts of dangerous but he didn't care. They had developed a fast bond in the murder of Jorge Corwell, after all. It was impossible to deny such a thing, if Will even had a want to. His curiosity for this stranger - now friend - bloomed openly, and it was requited by Hannibal, if the smile that shed years from his face was any indication to go by. Will had a feeling he would question himself later on, when he wasn't in the presence of a self-proclaimed non-fledgling, but for now, he nursed the growing warmth in his gut for the man that had stuck the pig in the other room with his knife and said 'that was for your daughter.'

Will loved his daughter very much.

Oh Dear

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal murder bond.

Chapter Notes

These two bastards will be my death. I should be sleeping more, but this is far too fun. All mistakes are mine~

NOTE: Changing the title to Murder Friends to easier dictate the timeline, as I'm making this an ongoing series instead now! The series name is Murder Dating instead! ♥

Hannibal had brought his own bag of supplies, it turned out. It was tucked into the shadows where he'd set it silently while approaching earlier. Made of suede, the inconspicuous satchel matched its owner, looking to be worth more than most people made a month. Will's eyebrow raised and he only just managed not to roll his eyes. Instead, he tracked Hannibal as the man stopped at the side of the corpse in the chair and knelt gracefully to unzip soft leather, setting aside a plastic container and-

"A body bag? Seriously?" Will questioned, walking closer under the old light bulb casting its dying light over the room.

"How do you transport the body, then?" Hannibal paused long enough to look at Will curiously over his shoulder, the other man coming to stand at his side to peer over his plastic-clad shoulder.

"I don't. I use my trusty bonesaw and a lot of garbage bags."

Hannibal didn't respond for a long time, raking his eyes over Will standing there with his gloved hands shoved into his pockets, apparently unmindful of the blood still drying on them. On closer inspection, the long black jacket he wore was stained in various places, and not all of them were new ones. Then there was that smudge of crimson on his stubbled cheek, stark in comparison to pale skin, and his glasses had a minor spray of blood along the lenses where they sat crooked on a shapely nose. But despite it, Will looked as if they were browsing a shop or exchanging recipes. To say that Will was the only one curious tonight was entirely incorrect. Hannibal finally let the smile return to his face as he stood.

"You have a lot to learn, Will," he professed decidedly.

“Do I? I don’t know, it’s worked fine for me any other time. Plus it’s a real nice workout, bone is pretty hard to saw through,” Will spoke with a joking tone of false confidence, one that he’d taken on this evening that he suspected had everything to do with the man staring at him now, who brought out in him a need to impress.

“It is. However, disassembling the body at the scene of the crime requires speed, efficiency, and the absolute knowledge that nothing is going to happen to compromise your situation,” Hannibal moved closer and reached up suddenly, fast like a cat, and Will watched slightly cross-eyed as his glasses were straightened gently.

“Thanks,” he said, nonplussed.

“You’re welcome,” and there was a small bow of Hannibal’s upper body, before he knelt again and puttered around. “I assume you do it in the bathtub?”

“Uh, what? Oh, right, yeah,” Will almost smacked his forehead with his palm.

He’d watched plastic gloved fingers come into range and adjust glasses he didn’t even realize had fallen crooked, a habit of Will’s everyday life. The action had been a surprise, especially at its tenderness, and his nose had been filled with the scent that he assumed was Hannibal, and it reminded him of the library he worked at. Old books and yellowing papers and the smell that accompanied them, that was what Hannibal’s scent was reminiscent of, but it was also earthy and fresh, and, absurdly, he was wearing cologne. Will supposed that shouldn’t come as a shock, but he had some apparently half-baked idea that if you’re going to kill someone, you do your damndest not to be noticed. Hannibal, it seemed, had confidence enough to smell like a champ while committing his sins.

“A very unsafe procedure, especially if you’re allowing excess blood down the drain,” Hannibal informed him. “Which I’m assuming you do, no offence intended.”

“None taken. Look, are we taking murder lessons now? Because my way has worked thus far and that’s really all that matters to me,” Will said not unkindly. “I just do what I do and I leave. And I need to be home soon, by the way. I have work in the morning.”

A beat of silence. The mundane comment was entirely out of place over a slack body bled dry in a chair, but so was the entire night, Will felt. Once the words had left his mouth he worried that they were offensive, but he barely had time to backtrack before Hannibal wordlessly went back to work, stretching out the heavy black body bag and unzipping it. It felt like it took only seconds for Hannibal to unsheath his butcher knife from bloody flesh to cut the ropes and then haul the corpse up, holding it bridal style to contain the organs that wanted to slip out. Will watched pink innards wiggle around wetly and looked away then. He’d seen worse out of necessity, but if Hannibal was taking the reins tonight, then he would take it easy.

“I will handle Mister Corwell,” Hannibal said neutrally. “This time. Perhaps you can consider my methods for next time.”

“You sound so sure that there will be a next time,” Will commented.

“I do hope so. I would love to do this again.”

And by ‘this’, Will assumed kill together. There was really no other way to take that, and he didn’t bother fighting the blooming flower of pride within him. He nursed his curiosity for Hannibal with an open palm, stroking it and drawing it out into his veins and embracing it like he normally never did. He considered the term *murder bonding* with an inward laugh, but regardless of the humor, there was a very real chance that Will would not have even looked twice at Hannibal under normal circumstances. He was not a people person, beyond his daughter and his friend-mostly-colleague Beverly Katz, and sometimes he did speak to Abigail’s teacher Alana Bloom about the weather and not school-things.

“You never know what can happen, I guess,” Will said finally. “Although I question myself by saying I had a great evening.”

“Why question yourself? Did you genuinely have a ‘great’ evening, Will?” Hannibal stood and faced Will with an eyebrow raised and lips curved as big blue eyes met his maroon ones unhesitantly.

“Yeah,” Will nodded. “I did. I am.”

The unspoken ‘even though I normally don’t kill to have a great time,’ was brushed away before Will could seriously consider it, and Hannibal said, “Then don’t question yourself. Just embrace the present.”

“You talk like my old shrink,” Will laughed, covered his mouth with his hand to stop it, but gave up and hid the amused bend of his lips and narrowed his eyes at Hannibal, who looked mildly stricken. “Oh my god. You’re a shrink, aren’t you?”

“Must I be a ‘shrink’ to tell you to enjoy the moment, Will?” Hannibal asked expressionlessly.

Will’s smile fell and he dropped his hand. Before he could apologize for laughing at the man unnecessarily, Hannibal began to snicker. The sound was so unlike how he looked, unbridled and childish in juxtapose to neat lines and preciseness, that it was Will’s turn to look stricken, before eventually he began to laugh again at this enigmatic man before him -at, and with.

“You’ll forgive my attempt at joking, but yes, I was a psychiatrist not too long ago,” Hannibal inclined his head as Will finally smacked his forehead with his palm.

“Was?” Will echoed.

“Yes. It became too gruelling and also very monotonous for me, sadly. It was enough knowing that I was assisting people in finding some semblance of peace in their chaotic lives, at least at first. Very quickly it became too many nostrils turned red from blowing noses and tears shed over literal spilled milk. Tedious, altogether.”

As he spoke, Hannibal finally faced the body again, and then, with a movement just as sudden as earlier, he kicked his foot into the seat of the chair that had recently been vacated, and Will watched it snap like a twig. With strong hands and practiced actions, Hannibal

dismantled the piece of furniture and tucked the segments into the body bag along with Jorge Corwell, zipped it up, and then walked away and left Will to stand in the room uncertainly. He did a roundabout, observing the floor still wrapped in plastic, and realized belatedly that they had both been standing in blood the entire time, the puddle still wet but no longer growing. Such had been his distraction thanks to Hannibal, who had slipped into his life as quickly and quietly like a blade into flesh, and wasn't that a very apt comparison.

"I have been impolite," Hannibal's voice called from the bathroom, before a second later he walked back into the living room with Will's duffel of his own supplies. "You have come as prepared as you know to, and it was unfair of me to make light of that. I also forget that not every man has a place to bring his work back to, after all."

Will took the bag from Hannibal with a nod of thanks that was returned with maroon eyes glittering brightly at him. It was Will's turn to be appraised, and he felt Hannibal's gaze like it was a physical thing, as if it were soft fingers stroking down his face and neck and across his chest. Not an altogether unpleasant thing, and warmth splashed around in Will's gut as he felt himself inexplicably grow shy under those darkly expressive eyes. Just then, Hannibal's words decided to make sense, though.

"Do you have a cellar somewhere with freezers full of body parts?" Will asked with a snicker.

"I do," Hannibal answered.

Blinking, Will gave himself credit for recovering quickly, but Hannibal took the laughter that exploded out of him two seconds later in stride, just as he seemed to do with everything. Will couldn't help it. He felt lighter than he had in years, as if he were joking with a friend over coffee or discussing something ridiculous while strolling down the street. Blood was everywhere, his boots needed to be cleaned very thoroughly, his body was growing heavy with happy fatigue, and in a few hours he had to wake up Abigail for school and pack her lunch since he'd forgot to before he left tonight.

"Alright. Okay, of course you do. Not a fledgling," Will finally got his humor under control and quirked his lips at Hannibal. "How do you get the body there?"

"The trunk of my car."

"Jus- just like that? Isn't that reckless?"

Hannibal smiled brightly and nodded, before saying, "Entirely so, but my way has worked thus far and that's really all that matters to me."

The words were spoken in an affectionate tone that took the bite out of the jest, but Will let out one more giggle, breathy and disbelieving. Not that the man would crack a joke, but that he had done it in such a manner that it was like a pat on the back or a ruffle of his hair. Hannibal was truly something, Will was realizing. What that something was remained to be seen, but he was glad to put any amount of time into discovering more.

He realized just then that he'd been staring at his companion, and that Hannibal had been doing the same, the both of them taking each other in silently but with great effort. All the old house sounds and the various disgusting smells of the room and the stickiness at their feet had faded away until for them, only the other existed in this moment. Even breaths echoed each other, maroon and blue eyes met and danced, studied one another with eagerness and intent, and Will parted his lips and licked the dryness from them unconsciously. Sharp eyes broke contact to dart down at the action, and Hannibal's nostrils flared.

"You ought to get home," Hannibal said finally, bringing them both back into the present moment. "As I said, I will manage here. It's the least I can do after interrupting your justice. Though, and perhaps I'm merely stroking my own ego, I believe you don't have much of an issue with that part."

"Less of an issue, more of an interest," Will said, nodded at Hannibal and looked away as he considered the fact that he'd almost blushed under their earlier mutual scrutiny. "But thanks. I really appreciate it."

"You're most welcome. Though I must insist you bring less plastic next time," and here Hannibal moved close again, slower this time, gauging Will's reaction as he moved into his bubble.

"There you go with that 'next time' again," Will snorted and watched his companion get closer, but stood his ground despite instinctively wanting to seek space.

"You never know what might happen."

Hannibal reached up for the second time that night and thumbed away the dried smear of blood on Will's cheek, mouth parted slightly and eyes narrowed with his intent. The action was casual but personal on a level Will would have generally answered with a none-too-light shove or a firm punch, but he made no movement now, stopped breathing entirely until Hannibal's hand had fallen away from his face. He exhaled in a gentle gust then as he blinked up at the other man, and neither of them said a word for several long minutes that felt to Will like a lifetime.

"Goodnight, Will," Hannibal said quietly.

"Goodnight, Hannibal," Will whispered.

When he left the house, duffel swinging at his side casually, boots wiped off in the dirty sink in the kitchen on his way out, Will looked up at the smoggy night sky and smiled.

Murder friend, indeed.

Dear Abi

Chapter Summary

A look into the life of Will and his adopted daughter Abigail Hobbs.

Chapter Notes

Not too much happens in this chapter, but I love the father-daughter relationship between Will and Abigail, and this was my chance to explore it!

All mistakes are mine~

NOTE: Changing the title to Murder Friends to easier dictate the timeline, as I'm making this an ongoing series instead now! The series name is Murder Dating instead! ♥

By the time Will got home he was exhausted and listing just slightly. The adrenaline of the evening, of dispatching Jorge alongside Hannibal, had left him thrumming with an influx of energy he normally didn't face after he'd finished a kill, but it was fading and he was crashing fast. In the past, killing had been like a chore, done without any feeling besides the initial one that had started it in the first place - anger, generally, but other times fear. Tonight, however, it had all felt like a-

A murder date, Will humorously thought, as he opened and closed his front door after moving inside.

The apartment was small, but also familiar enough that he could traverse it easily in the dark, and as he passed the sleeping babysitter in the living room, Will sniffed at the air. It was clouded under her perfume, but yes, she'd been smoking. Again. And inside this time, it seemed. *Okay, so new caretaker and new babysitter, great*, he thought with a tired roll of his eyes.

He'd taken his boots off at the door after closing and locking it, and held them now in his hands and slipped across the hardwood floor on socked feet. Once he'd made it to his room he plopped them into his closet, and then began to shed. Jacket, gloves, pants were all folded messily into a nondescript box that he slipped back under his bed. The t-shirt and undershirt beneath the jacket he removed and tossed onto the floor, along with his socks. His room was bathed in moonlight, muting it blue, and Will looked at his bed longingly. But instead of face-planting into it he pulled on boxers and a clean undershirt, padded quietly out of his room and down the hall, and peeked into Abigail's.

She was a tiny bundle under heavy blankets, dark hair sticking up out of the top just a bit, and his tired face softened into a loving smile as he noticed the nightlight had been removed again. She used to be adamant that the monsters under her bed hated it, he recalled, but now she was old enough to not need it, though she hadn't admitted it yet. He sat down on the bed next to her to gently unclasp small hands from the blankets and unravel her slightly so she wouldn't sweat quite so bad. *That's my lil' blanket burrito*, he thought fondly.

Finally, he returned to his bedroom, closed the door with a click, and promptly fell onto his bed into the center, not bothering with blankets. His last waking thoughts were of Hannibal's maroon eyes peering into his own with questionable intentions.

❀

Morning came faster than a blink, it felt. His alarm trilled, and Will grunted as he half fell out of bed and struggled to turn it off. Sleep crusted at the corner of his eyes, and his hair was damp with sweat, and it wasn't until he had showered and dressed in his work ensemble that he actually opened his eyes fully, and even then it was because of the scent of coffee wafting beautifully into his face. Five fully loaded teaspoons of sugar later, he grasped his mug and woke the babysitter, paid her, and watched her leave with a false smile and an even more false 'Yeah, I'll call you again next time I need someone to look after Abi.' He sipped at his mug once and stared at the door after her with a disgruntled expression.

"Good morning, dad," a cheery voice interrupted him, and he turned around with a smile that was most definitely not false, or even small, an all-teeth-bared expression of delight as his daughter made her appearance.

Abigail was a good child. She woke to an alarm that was set at the same time as his, and had no issue with it, getting dressed and grooming herself with soft hums he sometimes heard when he waited for the coffee to brew. Today her hair was pulled into a tail that bounced behind her as she skated her socks on the floor with a sleepy giggle, launching herself against him when she neared her father. Will laughed affectionately and clasped his free arm around her shoulders and hummed happily.

"How was work?" she asked as she peered up at him with impossibly wide and adorable blue eyes.

"Long," he confessed, looking down at her. "I think I made a friend, though."

"Wow, shocker," she joked with a giggle, and the sound of it was enough to brighten Will's morning exponentially.

She knew sometimes her dad had to work very late shifts at his second job, something to do with a warehouse that wasn't always busy but that he was on call for at any hour. She didn't mind at all, though, because she knew her dad was a hard worker and that he did a lot to support them both. Sometimes her friends made fun of him, and by proxy her, but she was proud of her ability to stick her nose up and ignore it. She loved her dad very very much, and wasn't about to stress him out by punching a dumb boy in the nose.

“Funny,” Will sipped his coffee and finally releasing her. “Lunch is on the counter, nothing too exciting, but we’ll pick up some things after work and school on Friday.”

“Is Miss Sterling coming today?” Abigail asked.

“Miss Sterling’s ‘family emergency’ is pretty bad, it turns out. We’ll have to find someone else,” Will assured.

“I didn’t like her anyway. Sometimes she looked at me like I was stupid,” Abigail confessed.

Will felt his nose twitch in a need to snarl. Abigail was beautiful and precious and probably had more intelligence in a single finger than Miss Sterling did in her entire body. But he fought the anger and won, sipped his coffee again, and winked at Abigail as he made a joke about just who was stupid, and Abigail snickered loudly after gasping at her dad for being what any other person would say rude. But this family was built on honesty and love, not strict rules and parameters that drove a youth to rebel. Most of it had to do with Abigail’s own personality, and so she was hardly ever punished, but Will never let himself forget that she was only twelve years old, still a child despite the teen that would be tacked on the end when she turned a year older in two weeks time.

“Mrs Bloom says she needs to talk to you, by the way,” Abigail informed him later, as they both grabbed their bags -her shoving her brown paper bag lunch into her backpack, and him shouldering his tatty messenger bag- and left the house.

“Oh? Alright, I’m sure Mister Stammets won't mind me being a bit late today,” Will locked the door behind them and accepted Abigail’s hand and they strode down the small walkway outside the apartment building.

The morning was chilly but not overbearingly so, but he’d made sure they were both adequately dressed. He knew soon he’d have to put aside the funds to get them new boots and jackets for winter, for Abi at least, who despite being well behaved, did enjoy popular trends and could throw quite the hissy fit if she so desired. Will was fortunate to have not experienced that very often, though, and even if sometimes he did spoil her a bit too much, it was fine. They had a nice little family together and generally all was smooth in paradise.

“Is your new friend nice?” Abigail asked as she peered up at him.

“Hmm? Oh, yeah, he’s really nice,” Will answered and smirked inwardly as he thought about Hannibal for the first time this morning, and it was with a rush of warm emotions that had him blinking and hoping his face wasn’t as red as it suddenly felt. “He helped me at work last night. He knew a lot more than me.”

“So he could lift boxes better than you?” Abigail teased gently.

Will snickered and rolled his eyes good-naturedly. He’d told her about his supposed warehouse job casually, and it had been a chore, lying to her, but it was necessary, of course. Filling the morning with half-false stories wasn’t what he wanted to do, though, and he turned the subject over to school, learned with satisfaction that Abigail had been the only one to ace a recent test. He was also informed that her piano instructor had praised her yesterday

for being a fast learner, and his belly filled with pride at how she beamed up at him. They arrived at school ten minutes later, having walked hand in hand down the street as they did often, Abigail calling good morning to quite a few people on the streets, and Will looking at his shoes to avoid awkward eye-contact. Once inside out of the cool morning air, Will escorted her to her morning class with Mrs Alana Bloom.

The woman was dressed smartly in a black pantsuit, her dark hair done up in a french twist, and her pretty face was arranged into a polite grin as they came into the classroom. Will met her bright eyes for about three seconds before shuffling in place awkwardly, waiting until Abigail had wandered off to put her jacket in one of the closets at the back of the room.

“Good morning, Mister Graham,” Alana greeted him.

“Good morning, Mrs Bloom,” Will looked at her heeled shoes as he spoke. “Abigail said you needed to talk to me?”

“Yes, but it’s nothing serious. Or bad,” she assured him. “Actually quite the opposite. Do you have a few minutes now?”

“Yeah,” Will answered without looking at the clock, knowing he’d be late regardless.

“Okay, awesome. Well, I wanted to let you know that Abigail is far ahead of the rest of the class with her spelling and vocabulary,” Mrs Bloom took a seat on the edge of her desk and looked over at Abigail taking her seat in the center of the room and smiling at some of the other students that were already seated. “In fact she seems pretty bored in class. I’m basically wondering if I can adjust her curriculum just a bit to offer more of a challenge.”

“Oh, wow, yeah of course,” Will chanced a glance at her and then looked at his daughter proudly. “Definitely okay with that, thank you for letting me know.”

“Of course, I aim to keep all of the parents well informed. Education is important to us here, and keeping Abigail stimulated enough is integral. I believe she enjoys my class a lot, so I’m just doing what I feel is correct and needed.”

“Yeah, for sure. I’m glad. She’s a bright kid,” Will felt his chest expand with happiness and he winked at Abigail when she looked up just then, returning her beaming expression. “I’m sensing a ‘but’, though.”

“Well,” Mrs Bloom cleared her throat. “There’s definitely a ‘but’. However, I think that’s a topic for another day when we both have more time. The new curriculum I’m putting together for her was my first and foremost topic on the agenda. Again, though, it’s nothing bad, per se. How about we meet sometime in the near future? I can stay a bit late until you’re off work and Abigail can wait with me.”

“Works for me,” Will coughed into his hand and shuffled in place again before meeting Mrs Bloom’s eyes again, flitting over her pretty face and hoping he looked appropriately concerned and not at all as worried as he immediately was at her words.

“Awesome,” the teacher repeated. “I’ll talk to you then?”

“Yeah, of course. Have a great day.”

“And you.”

Will waved at Abigail, and then at Alana Bloom quickly, before striding out and power walking out of the school. The chilly air assuaged some of his anxiety over the situation, and by the time he arrived at the library fifteen minutes away, he’d managed to corral the thoughts into the back of his mind, having the confidence that Abigail was fine and was doing great in school -more than great. He chalked it up to his overprotectiveness and put on his work-face for the day. Mister Eldon Stammets was predictably understanding, and Will thanked him profusely, wondering if he was a single father as well, and if not, he was thankful for the seeming unending patience he had with Will’s bumpy schedule.

❀

At lunch, Will shoved his peanut butter and jam sandwich into his mouth and devoured it in two bites, chasing it down with apple juice. He sat one of the long tables at the back of the library in the staff room, staring off into space and considering the previous night. He finally let the memories take hold, and took the time to consider the feeling in his chest whenever he thought about Hannibal. The man had been so articulate and intelligent, fiercely so, and so very polite that Will rolled his eyes inwardly. The easy way they had gotten along wasn’t lost on Will, but he did have to wonder at the situation from a critical view. After he got passed the unlikelihood of them meeting, there to murder the same man -and the novelty of that would never fade, Will felt-, it became apparent that he had essentially spent his night with a full-fledged serial killer. A body parts-in-freezers kind of serial killer.

Emptying the styrofoam cup of apple juice, Will began to tear it up afterwards as he got lost in his thoughts. He had another ten minutes or so before his lunch break was up, so he had the leeway to think about Hannibal’s eyes and the way they crinkled at the corners, at the barely noticeable scar on the bridge of his elegant nose. He’d been clean shaven and smelled great, and was just the perfect amount taller than Will to warrant him having to look up to view him properly. It was at that point that he remembered the fact that his dick had been twitching interestedly for approximately the entire time after they’d killed Jorge together, and he blinked in belated embarrassment as he wondered if Hannibal had noticed. Being able to take a step back now to actually sift through the events, Will began to notice more things that he hadn’t been able to at the time.

The awkward boner was the least of his concerns, he felt with amusement. There had been a very distinct atmosphere as they spoke, their words circling each other with familiarity that strangers did not usually possess quite so suddenly, and despite the humor that accompanied the thought of ‘murder friends’ and ‘murder date’, Will had to be honest with himself. He was definitely interested in Hannibal, and he barely refrained from laughing as he sat there alone in the staffroom - he didn’t need people thinking he was weirder than they already considered him.

I have a murder crush on a serial killer, Will admitted to himself. *Dear god, what is my life right now?*

He was still laughing at himself and the situation entirely when his break finished. He dutifully set to work putting their daily returns back on the shelves, and the rest of his shift passed by with pleasant thoughts until he clocked out early to go pick up Abigail from school to escort her to her piano lessons. Mister Stammets waved at him as he left, and Will went a little overkill on the thanks again. He made it to the school after jogging, noting with pleasure that Abigail was sitting on the steps waiting with a bright grin. She hugged him, uncaring like most children of the public affection.

“How did school go?” Will asked with genuine interest.

“It was okay. I made a friend, I think. Her name is Elise. She says she really likes my backpack,” Abigail answered with a grin.

“That’s great. Do you like her?” Will secured her hand in his as they walked together down the street, the one adjacent to the shortcut Abigail had taken the day Jorge Corwell had attacked her.

“She’s cool. I saw her mom pick her up and she didn’t look very nice, though.”

Apparently Elise’s mom yelled a lot, Will was told. He listened intently to Abigail as she described the rest of her day, and they joked about mundane things, finally arriving at the building she took her piano lessons at. She had them three days a week, at her own insistence, and despite the hefty fee, Will acquiesced because he loved her and wanted to nurture any and all of her interests. Today was her second lesson of the week and tomorrow was her last, and Will opened the door for her when they arrived with a gentle smile and a nod at her blue eyes as she thanked him politely. The secretary behind the desk greeted them casually, used to the scruffy single father that sometimes dropped off her boss’s favorite student. She knew the basics, that he worked at the library (she saw him sometimes when she went to check out her knitting books), and that despite his windswept and harried appearance, he loved his daughter enough to spend a chunk of his salary on her lessons here.

Will smiled at the secretary briefly, a little less nervous around her than he was with Alana Bloom, but only because he saw a lot more of the petite blond woman behind her desk. He’d yet to meet the owner of the place thanks to his work schedule, the man who Abigail assured him was very nice, and in the past the caretakers he'd hired handled that part, giving Will a nice opportunity to deal with one less person in his day.

“I’ll see you at six, hun,” Will called out as he left the building.

Her happy ‘okay’ was drowned out at the end as the door clicked shut behind him, and he walked away from *Lecter’s Legato* to go see about finding a new babysitter and/or caretaker for his precious daughter.

Dear God

Chapter Summary

In which Will is betrayed and also utterly confused.

Chapter Notes

Sorry if the last chapter feels off. I'm not feeling great but the story still wanted to go on despite it! If it feels weird or inconsistent drop me a comment. I love this story and I know it's going to be a monster of a series yet. ♥♥♥

NOTE: Changing the title to Murder Friends to easier dictate the timeline, as I'm making this an ongoing series instead now! The series name is Murder Dating instead! ♥

The next day Jorge Corwell's corpse was the topic of conversation and news.

Will had just clocked in at work, late again as he had yet to find a caretaker to replace Miss Sterling, and he felt with no uncertain amount of dread that something was wrong immediately. He'd woken up that morning with his guts twisted into nervous knots, and had just managed to quell the foreboding feeling that drew his body into tenseness. Beverly Katz strode over to him immediately and dropped a newspaper onto the desk in front of him.

"Look at this," she proclaimed without preamble.

MAN FOUND DEAD, the headline screamed. Will unseated himself from the staff computer and grabbed the paper to spread it out, eyes flitting over the inked words, stomach dropping and heart climbing into his throat. Jorge Corwell stared out at him, the article having included the most recent picture of him while alive, and emotion rushed over Will so completely that his shock was entirely genuine. Beverly clicked her tongue and started to chatter, but he barely heard her over the blood rushing in his ears. A few choice sentences stuck out as he read the blurb, ignoring the part where Corwell's life was recounted, lighting instead on the description of how his corpse had been found, which didn't have much to offer other than that it was brutalized.

"Apparently his genitals were shoved down his throat," Beverly gushed.

"Are you- why do you sound so excited, Bev?" Will had a feeling he would regret asking.

“Because hello, stuff like this hardly happens around here,” she said. “Well I mean yeah, people get murdered, but like this? The dude had a pole shoved up hi-”

“Please, for the love of god, I don't want to know,” Will hissed and rubbed his palm against his eyes.

He squinted down at the paper, which had neglected to mention any of the things Beverly seemed privy to. But he knew his colleague frequented TattleCrime, the awful online journal Will was incredibly certain defied more ethics than the murder of Jorge Corwell had, and *he* had been the one to murder the man. Sure enough, Beverly began to gossip about Freddie Lounds, the owner of the articles that had people scrambling over each other to read and devour as if they were the gospel truth.

“I can’t even imagine what that dude must have done to deserve this,” Beverly was saying, and then, as if she’d entirely dismissed the tangent of thought, she said, “Hey! You look like shit today.”

“Thanks, Bev.”

“No problem, buddy,” and she ruffled his hair quicker than he could react to, before snatching up her newspaper and strolling away with a loud laugh, long black hair flitting as she turned the corner out of the staff room.

Will growled under his breath and attempted to pat down his hair into as much order as he could, but gave up and rolled his eyes with a smirk. He wasn’t used to her easy affection, in fact he felt downright awkward when she touched him, but something about her made him grudgingly respect her, even if she disrespected personal space. When Will had started working here he had been incredibly withdrawn. He had no issue interacting with the library patrons, though, and he could direct them in their searches effortlessly. Mister Stammets had been impressed at how quickly his new employee had learned the layout and their organizational system, and apparently that had passed along the grapevine to other workers. Beverly had teased Will from the get-go, at first gaining ‘annoying female’ status in Will’s mind, but it had evolved over the year into an absurd affection for the rowdy woman. They were not really friends at all, but they weren’t only co-workers either.

This morning, though, Will dismissed any thoughts of Beverly quickly as he followed her out of the staff room to begin work. He checked books in and out, gathered returns and put them into the system before wheeling the shelf down the necessary aisles to set them back into their respective spots. The entire time his body quivered and his thoughts raced, until at lunch break he had to sit in the bathroom on the closed lid of the toilet and bury his face in his hands. The butterflies that had been fluttering around his stomach since his meeting with Hannibal fell dead, and they were a heavy weight in his guts, wearing him down until he felt exhausted. Any lingering interest in the mysterious man he’d met and bonded with after they’d killed the man from the newspaper together -it was dulled considerably by the morning's headline. Will growled into his hands and hated himself just a bit at how betrayed he felt.

He’d trusted the man with hardly any repercussions at the time, but now Will realized that he’d been charmed by the snake. He would call himself stupid if he felt it would change

anything, but the fact was that Jorge Corwell's corpse had been found practically gift-wrapped, and Will's safety and freedom was compromised. As a result, now Abigail was in danger, and Will's chest went cold. By the time he returned to his work his body felt like lead, heavy and clunking as he zombie-walked down the aisle and continued to put away books on auto-pilot. When he clocked out early to go pick up Abigail from school, he barely spared a glance at his boss. If he had, he might have noticed the tense expression on the older man's normally amiable face. As it was, Will walked with his head down and met his daughter on the steps outside of the school.

It was Thursday, the last day of her lessons for the week, but she didn't look even a quarter as done with the week as Will was. He had been done with the entire day before it had really started, he realized. His attempts at schooling his expression into a happy one for his daughter's sake surprisingly worked, but he knew she sensed that something was wrong with her father. She knew the man functioned on stress more often than not, and she endeavored to make every day easier on him as she could, but today there was a darkness in his eyes she didn't feel like a hug or a joke could lift, so she grabbed his hand and looked up at him reassuringly, not questioning the tension she could practically feel.

"Rough day at work," Will finally said, unable to speak the truth but also unable to pretend around her for long. "How was school?"

"It was okay. Everyone is behaving strange today, though," Abigail muttered, the unspoken 'you as well' felt in the flitting of her eyes up at his face.

"One of those days, I guess," and Will swallowed nervously, debating on asking what came to mind, finally deciding not to, as the idea of talking about murder with his daughter was incredibly distasteful to him.

"Elise says that a man died," Abigail whispered softly, taking the choice from her father, regretting speaking momentarily as she saw his stricken face go pale. "Her mom told her. I'm sorry, dad."

"You have nothing to be sorry for, hun. Her mom should have known better than to say anything around Elise."

Will wracked his brain for the patience not to lose his shit. The twisting of the proverbial knife that was betrayal at Hannibal's actions filled every vein of his body with livid frustration. What had been fear and dread for most of his day at work had steadily evolved into anger the likes of which he hadn't felt in a long time. Even in comparison to what had driven him to kill Jorge in the first place, even that, while still incredibly warranted, had nothing on the rage that contorted his limbs right now. The entire time after reading the article had been devoted to sifting through the events that had transpired between him and Hannibal. The easy camaraderie, the actual genuine joy that had pervaded his senses during and the day after, all of it made Will want to puke. He'd been so blind, had stared a demon in the eyes as it wrapped him around its clawed fingers and commandeered him like a puppet. He hugged Abigail tightly after dropping her off at *Lecter's Legato*, and then walked to the cafe he frequented occasionally.

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Crawford's Treats was run by a middle-aged couple named Jack and Bella. They were polite but not overbearing, and more importantly they didn't seem to mind that Will only bought one drink and spent a few hours tucked into the corner staring grumpily out the window. The baked goods were home-made and sinfully delicious, especially the blueberry muffins, but Will grunted out his order for a small coffee and nodded once at Jack. When Will had first decided to check the cafe out for convenience, he'd been struck with the ridiculous sight of the man behind the cash register. He was massive in both height and bulk, and he looked more like a man you'd see guarding a person of authority, or even within the rings of a wrestling match. Despite that, though, he was articulate and genuine when he smiled at people, though the expression was never as bright as when he was looking at his beautiful wife as she made the orders.

Will loved the little cafe because it was small and homey, lacking the official air of other mainstream branches. The chairs were gleaming wood with plaid cushioning and the round tables were sturdy and carved into various intricate designs, each one adorned with a different patterned cloth covering. Will's corner had a smaller table and one chair, and the cloth had dogs stitched into it. He took his seat and flipped open the tab on his coffee, but ignored it in favor of the newspaper he had snatched on his way here.

It was hard to flip to the classifieds without his eyes lighting briefly on the article on the front. The words were as familiar now to him as any, but still he found himself staring at the portrait on the front blankly for a few minutes. Jorge Corwell had been forty-five, with ruddy skin and long greasy hair. He was overweight and had a cocktail of mental disorders. The newspaper appointed him a victim and his death had garnered the sympathies of people who didn't know what he really had been. Will couldn't bring himself to feel anger now, though. It had all bled out of him when he sat down, rushing out of him in a gust of breath. If he were frank with himself, he was feeling hurt. Not just because he was seemingly betrayed, but because he had actually thought there was something there between him and Hannibal. Will realized with a blink that he was sulking. His ego stung painfully at having wordlessly believed that Hannibal would 'handle Mister Corwell.'

Additionally, there was the danger looming over him that the murder would be tied back to him. It sat in his periphery like a big fat monster crouching in preparation to leap. But mainly he was dealing with the beginnings of what resembled a scorned heart, and wasn't that just great? Will mourned his sanity as he sipped his coffee and finally perused the classifieds. By the time six rolled around he'd made a note of two potential caretakers, but decided he might as well write up his own article to submit tomorrow at work when he had computer access. His lack of a social circle made it difficult to find someone adequately, and Miss Sterling had been conveniently outside of the music shop-cum-school a few days after Abigail had begun taking her lessons. Now, armed with the knowledge that the woman had taken money to abandon his daughter in the street, he was pretty certain that Miss Sterling had been planted from the beginning.

As if his ego needed anything else to smack it around, Will tossed this revelation around his skull masochistically as he finished his coffee and disposed of it and the newspaper on his way out of the cafe. When he arrived back at *Lecter's Legato*, the bell over the door chimed pleasantly and heralded his arrival. Abigail was chattering excitedly with the secretary, who engaged her politely with conversation, and they both looked up at him as he walked in.

“Hello, Mister Graham,” the petite woman greeted. “Abigail was just telling me about Miss Sterling.”

“Hi there,” Will nodded, and he embraced his daughter as she attached herself to his side. “Yeah, Miss Sterling is indisposed of for the time being.”

“I can talk to my niece if you’d like. She’s a responsible young lady, I’m sure she can take over for Miss Sterling.”

Will’s day brightened a bit at that, and they discussed a few specifics as Abigail wandered around the lobby and waited politely. They exchanged numbers for future contact, and Will informed the secretary that he would call her next week after she’d had the time to talk to her niece about everything, and then he and Abigail left to walk home. Sitting at their small table that night, steaming plates of food in front of them, father and daughter recounted both of their days with a much more pleasant air around them in comparison to this afternoon, and afterwards Will did the dishes as Abigail did her homework.

“Oh yeah,” she announced loudly from the living room. “I forgot. Mister Lecter wanted me to give you something.”

She came into the kitchen and waited for him to dry his hands before holding out a slim black box, explaining, “He said you forgot this. You should be more careful, dad.”

Abigail giggled at the joke as Will took the proffered object with a confused blink, and then tossed her hair as she returned to finish her homework. The box was wrapped with a bright red ribbon and shaped rectangularly, and he had no idea what it could be or how he could have forgotten it, as he had never once met Mister Lecter thanks to their collective timing. He’d heard many great things about the man from Abigail and even Miss Sterling had relayed messages from the instructor occasionally with a mystified smile on her face. With a slightly shaking hand he unraveled the ribbon and let it flutter to the floor, slipping the cover off of the box and peering inside. His heart skipped a beat and sweat broke out on his brow immediately.

Nestled inside in a bed of blood-red tissue paper, Will’s forgotten switchblade glittered up at him innocently.

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